

10. THE DOG-FACED WATERSNAKE (*CERBERUS RHYNCHOPS*) IN THE BOMBAY AREA AND NOTES ON ITS HABITS

The complete and usually accurate zoological author, Malcolm A. Smith, states that *Cerberus rhynchops* 'is a comparatively rare species on Indian coasts' (FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA 3, 1943). A minimal amount of exploring the paddy drainage of creeks such as Bassein, Thana and Malad Creeks around Bombay indicates that actually this may be the most common aquatic snake next to *Natrix piscator* in this area. Below is given a sample one month collection period, October 24 to November 24. Occurring at the end of the monsoon, this is a time of increased snake activity. They are to be found at all times of the year, but most commonly from July through November. No special efforts was made to obtain this species, they were taken while doing general reptile and amphibian collection at night. *Cerberus* are sluggish and easy to capture, rarely attempting to bite. Bites are superficial and non-toxic though other rear-fanged species such as *Boiga* and *Dryophis* may cause some irritation. They concentrate around fish traps and small streams draining into the brackish creeks, and are found many miles from any salt-water. Reported by herpetological authors to be mainly fish-eaters, captive specimens feed well on frogs also, swallowing the prey alive often holding it for 10-15 minutes possibly for venom to take effect.

Date	Species	Length (mm.)	
Oct. 24	<i>Cerberus rhynchops</i>	600	smallest : 180 mm.
	" "	420	Largest : 880 mm.
" 26	" "	180	Average: 440
	" "	450	
	" "	880	10 males
	" "	400	6 females
Nov. 1	" "	400	
" 4	" "	810	
	" "	350	
	" "	340	
	" "	300	
" 12	" "	320	
	" "	300	
	" "	410	
" 19	" "	440	
" 24	" "	390	

C/o CHATTOPADHYAYA,
CHATEAU MARINE No. 6,
MARINE DRIVE,
BOMBAY,
November, 1968.

ROMULUS WHITAKER